

American Poetry Masters WebQuest

Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman

Emily Dickinson <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/155>

1. List three interesting facts about Dickinson's life from the biography page:
2. List two ideas in or characteristics of her poetry:
3. When did Dickinson die? What was found after her death?
4. Why do you think Dickinson never published her poems? Support your answer with evidence from the article.

Dickinson's Poetry

A. "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15392>

5. Why doesn't the speaker want others to "advertise" who he/she is? Who/what is the speaker?
6. What does Dickinson compare being in the public eye to? Why?
7. What do you think Dickinson means when she says, "To tell one's name- the livelong June- To an admiring Bog?" What's another way Dickinson could have worded the line? (paraphrase)
8. Keeping in mind Dickinson's biography, could this poem be an introspective piece? Provide evidence to support your theory.

B. "Because I could not stop for Death" <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15395>

9. What has just happened to the speaker in "Because I could not stop for Death?"
10. Is the tone positive, negative or neutral? Support your answer with words from the poem.
11. Describe the scenes the speaker passes by. Why might Dickinson have chosen these specific scenes to describe?
12. Explain how the speaker portrays Death in this poem - if at all?

C. "Fame is a fickle food" <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15396>

13. What does the speaker say about the longevity of being famous?
14. What does the speaker seem to evoke when you read this poem? What words does the speaker utilize to accomplish this?

D. Compare the Poems

15. What similarities do you see in the style of each poem? Do they share any common themes or tones?

Walt Whitman <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/126>

16. What kinds of jobs did Whitman work?

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

17. What was the title of his first book with twelve untitled poems and a preface? What year was it published? What happened after it was published?

18. When was Whitman born and when did he die?

A. "I Hear America Singing" <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15752>

19. List the various types of jobs listed in Whitman's poem. Do you think that Whitman's life influenced this poem based on his biography?

20. What does the speaker mean when he says that each of these laborers are "singing?"

Explain using examples from the poem.

21. Is the tone of the poem positive, negative, or neutral? Support your answer with words from the poem.

B. "America" <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/20157>

22. Is the tone of the poem positive, negative, or neutral? Support your answer with words from the poem.

23. Using the title as a clue, explain who the brothers and sisters are in the poem. What is their relationship to each other?

24. Who is the mother mentioned in the poem? Why is she "Chair'd in the adamant of Time?"

25. After reading "I Hear America Singing" and "America," do you think Whitman is patriotic? Why or why not?

Extra Credit

"Color-Caste- Denomination" <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/22067>

A. Based on this poem, do you think that Dickinson would be a friend of Martin Luther King, Jr, if they had been alive at the same time? Explain using examples from the poem.

"In Flanders Fields" (by John McCrae) <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/19464>

B. Compare this poem to Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for death." Are there any differences in the way that death is perceived? If so, explain what they are."